The Plate Method

The Plate Method is a simple way to keep carbohydrates to a moderate amount to improve blood sugar levels. Calories come from carbohydrate, protein, or fat. Carbohydrates have the largest and quickest effect on blood sugar. Carbohydrate foods include:

- Whole grains and starchy vegetables
- Fruit
- Milk and yogurt

Sugar is a concentrated form of carbohydrate. **Limit foods high in sugar** in your diet.
Follow these 5 steps to eat meals with the Plate Method

1. Divide a 9-inch plate in half and fill half of the plate with non-starchy vegetables.

These include:
- Artichoke
- Asparagus
- Bean sprouts
- Beets
- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Green or yellow beans
- Salad greens
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Peppers
- Radish
- Snow peas
- Sugar snap peas
- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Yellow squash
- Zucchini

Choose fresh or frozen vegetables that have no or limited added salt, sugar, or fat in a variety of colors to get a variety of vitamins and minerals.

Non-starchy vegetables:
- Provide your body some carbohydrates, but much less than the high carbohydrate food groups.
- Help fill you up without having a large effect on your blood sugar.
- Provide the fiber, vitamins, and minerals your body needs to function well.

2. Divide the other half of the plate in half again.

- Fill one section with whole grains or starchy vegetables:

  Whole grain options include:
  - Barley
  - Brown rice
  - Bulgur
  - Oats, oatmeal
  - Polenta
  - Quinoa
  - Whole grain breads
  - Whole grain cereals
  - Whole wheat couscous
  - Whole wheat pasta
  - Wild rice

  Starchy vegetable options include:
  - Beans, such as black, great northern, kidney, navy, and pinto beans
  - Black-eyed peas
  - Corn
  - Lentils
  - Peas
  - Potatoes with skin
  - Sweet potatoes with skin

- Fill the other section with protein foods.

These include:
- Beef, round and loin cuts, fat trimmed
- Cheese
- Chicken, no skin
- Cottage cheese, low-fat
- Eggs
- Fish (eat at least 2 times per week)
- Pork, loin cuts, fat trimmed
- Turkey, no skin
3. **Add a serving of fruit, milk, or yogurt to your meals or eat a serving for a snack.**
   Aim for 2 to 4 servings of fruit and 2 to 3 servings of milk or yogurt each day.

   **1 serving of fruit includes:**
   - 1 cup fresh melon, raspberries, or strawberries
   - ¾ cup fresh pineapple, blueberries, or blackberries
   - ½ cup fresh grapes
   - 1 small fresh fruit, such as an apple the size of a baseball
   - ½ of a large piece of fresh fruit, such as ½ of a large banana or ½ of a large pear
   - ½ cup canned fruit in juice or light syrup
   - 2 tablespoons of dried fruit
   - 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice unsweetened

   **1 serving of milk or yogurt includes:**
   - 1 cup (8 ounces) fat free milk
   - 1 cup (8 ounces) plain yogurt
   - 6 ounces light or plain Greek yogurt

4. **Keep added fats to small amounts.**
   Fats improve the taste of many foods, help us feel full longer, and provide essential nutrients. All fats are high in calories, so keep portions small:
   - 1 to 2 teaspoons of oil, margarine, butter, or mayonnaise
   - 1 tablespoon of salad dressing
   - 1 to 2 tablespoons of avocado
   - ¼ cup of nuts or seeds

5. **Drink mostly water with meals and snacks.**
   Aim for at least 8, 8-ounce, glasses of water each day. Water:
   - Is calorie-free and has no carbohydrates.
   - Is essential for your body’s cells, tissues, and organs.

   Plain coffee and tea are also calorie-free and often will not raise your blood sugar. However, **caffeine can have an impact on blood sugar for some people with diabetes.** You may want to limit the amount of caffeine in your diet to see if it keeps your blood sugars in a healthy range.
**General tips**

- Cook at home as much as possible, using low fat cooking methods, such as bake, broil, microwave, roast, steam, sauté, or grill. Restaurant foods and processed foods often have added sugar and more sodium.
- Choose fresh fruit or yogurt for dessert, or try a low carbohydrate dessert recipe.
- Eat breakfast daily and space meals about 4 to 5 hours apart. Eat snacks if meals are more than 4 to 5 hours apart. Do not skip meals.
- Read food labels and ingredient lists on packaged foods. Avoid foods that have trans fats and partially hydrogenated oils.